

UNIQUE & UNIFIED

THE CALVARY CHAPEL DISTINCTIVES

This article is condensed with permission and taken from Calvary Chapel Distinctives by the late Pastor Chuck Smith.

Over the next few issues, Calvary Chapel Magazine will be featuring a series on the Calvary Chapel Distinctives. Here follow the first three of twelve distinctives.

What makes Calvary Chapel different from other Bible-believing, evangelical churches? Certainly there are churches that share many of our beliefs and practices. We're not renegades. But God has done a wonderful work of balance in the Calvary Chapel movement that makes us different in many areas.

In Calvary Chapel, we find the teaching of the Word and an open heart to the work of the Holy Spirit. It is this balance that makes us a distinct and uniquely blessed movement of God. And so it's important to understand the biblical principles behind why God has allowed us to exist and grow.

This is not to say that all Calvary Chapels are identical. God, desiring to reach and bless all kinds of people, seems to enjoy having a wide variety of churches so that everybody's needs might be met—from the highly emotional to the very formal, and all those in between. Each of us has a part to play in God's plan, but we all need to know where we fit in this wide spectrum. That is why it's crucial for us to grasp what we call the Calvary Chapel Distinctives. As we see what makes our fellowship unique, we will also better understand our position in the Body of Christ.

The Call to the Ministry

It's absolutely essential for effective ministry that we have a conviction in our hearts that God has chosen and called us to serve Him. Ministry is not a profession or an option. It's a calling of God. As Paul expressed it, **"woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"** (1 Corinthians 9:16b). A pastor must also be committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. I am what I am not by my own ambitions, desires, or will. I am what I am by His will.

If I am committed to the Lord, I will also be committed to His Word and His ministry—to serve others. Jesus said, **"Whoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all"** (Mark 10:43b-44). The ministry is not a place of being served—of people waiting on you, honoring you, and respecting you because you're the minister. It's actually a place of serving people. You need to do everything as unto the Lord, knowing that of Him you will receive your reward.

There must also be a commitment to the Word of God. Anyone who doesn't believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God has no business being in the ministry. Be committed to it. As Paul said to Timothy, **"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"** (2 Timothy 2:15). You can learn how to study the Bible, but the learning process is never-ending.

God's Model for the Church

In Calvary Chapel, we look to the Book of Acts as the model for the church. This church was dynamic, led by the Holy Spirit, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit directed its operation and ministry. This church brought the Gospel to the world.

There were four basic functions of the early church. Acts 2:42 tells us, **"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."** These four foundations are essential for a fellowship of believers. If we lead people steadfastly in the Word of God, teaching the apostles' doctrine, bringing them into fellowship, participating in the breaking of bread, and praying together, we will see God meet every need. The Lord certainly took care of everything for the church in Acts. **"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved"** (Acts 2:47b). Never forget that it's not the pastor's job to add to the church. His job is to

feed the flock, tend the flock, love the flock, and see that they're well cared for.

The Church leaders in Acts were totally surrendered to Jesus Christ, not seeking their own glory, but only seeking to bring glory to Jesus. This is heavy on my own heart as we see people today striving to be successful, to create a name, to bring glory to themselves. However, Jesus insisted that the way up is down. **"And whoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted"** (Matthew 23:12). So live for the kingdom of God. Seek to bring glory to Jesus Christ and the Lord will use you.

Empowered by the Spirit


Another CC distinctive is our position concerning the Holy Spirit. We believe there is an empowering of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer that is distinct and separate from the indwelling of the Spirit at conversion. We acknowledge a three-fold relationship between the Holy Spirit and the believer that is represented by three Greek prepositions—'para' (with), 'en' (in), and 'epi' (upon).

In John 14, Jesus told the disciples, **"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you"** (John 14:16-17). 'With you' speaks of the 'para' relationship, the coming alongside. The 'en' or 'in you' is equivalent to our English preposition 'in' as in "He is going to dwell in you."

We believe that the Holy Spirit is dwelling with a person prior to conversion: He is convicting him of his sin, convincing him that Jesus Christ is the only answer. When anyone invites Jesus to come into his heart, to take control of his life, the Holy Spirit then comes into that person's life. He brings us to Christ, and when we come to Christ, He dwells in us.

We believe that there is a third, distinct relationship that the believer can have with the Spirit. In Acts 1:8a, we see this promise, **"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."** When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, the word is 'epi' in the Greek—'upon' or 'over'. I prefer the translation of 'overflow' because I believe this experience allows the Holy Spirit to flow forth out of our lives. Our lives then are not just vessels containing the Spirit, but they become channels by which the Spirit flows forth to touch the world around us. This 'coming upon' allows us to be effective witnesses for Jesus Christ.

When Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, **"Receive ye the Holy Ghost"** (John 20:22b), then they received the Holy Spirit. I believe that at that moment the disciples were born again by the Spirit of God. Then Jesus told His disciples that they were to wait in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). He also said, **"But ye shall receive power [dunamis], after that the Holy Ghost is come upon [epi] you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me"** (Acts 1:8a). They needed that overflowing of the Spirit to effectively share Christ.

So it's one thing to be filled with the Spirit, and it's quite another to have the Spirit flowing out. The inlet of the Spirit is powerful and dynamic, but there has to be that flowing forth of the Spirit from my life to affect and touch others around me. So we believe that there is an experience with the Holy Spirit that is distinct from conversion and indwelling. Some call it baptism. Some call it being filled with the Spirit. Whatever we choose to call it, it means being overflowed with the Spirit. The main question we must ask concerning this necessary empowering experience for the ministry is simple: Do you have it? 

Next issue, we will feature: Building the Church God's Way, Grace Upon Grace, and The Priority of the Word.

All Bible verses are quoted from the KJV.

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By Christmas Beeler

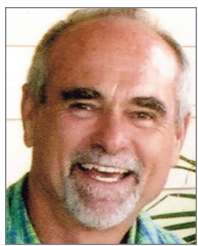
Part two of a continuing series on the Calvary Chapel Distinctives. This issue includes: *Building the Church God's Way*, *Grace upon Grace*, and *the Priority of the Word*.

Building the Church God's Way

Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. ZECHARIAH 4:6b

What defines Calvary Chapel? In his book *Calvary Chapel Distinctives*, the late Pastor Chuck Smith explained, "There isn't a lot of spiritual hype. The pastor doesn't try to motivate people carnally [or] shout at the congregation." He cited Psalm 127:1, ***Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it*** (NKJV). Chuck assured, "[H]ype and pressure aren't really going to do the job. We simply trust in the work of the Holy Spirit and that Jesus Christ is building His church as He said He would."

Chuck advised, "[W]henever you strive to gain, you must then strive to maintain.... If it's the Lord's work, if He has done it and He has added, then you don't have to strive to keep it going." He warned that pastors don't need to "find some new angle, gimmick, or experience. It's just the Word of God—alive and powerful [which] ministers to the spirit of the people."



Pastor Bill Stonebraker

Pastor Bill Stonebraker of CC Honolulu, HI, remembers how the Lord birthed a new fellowship on Oahu's North Shore many years ago. "God sees the need, and He uses who is available. In the early 1970s, the Jesus Movement was happening. The Lord began to pour His Spirit out on the North Shore. Every week, our home—just 800 square feet—was packed with 80 to 90 young people for Bible study. We prayed: 'God, bring somebody who knows what they're doing.' He never did; instead, He enlisted me. There was a need, and I was available." Bill met a fellow surfer who gave him a teaching tape by Chuck Smith. "I thought, *This is exactly how God is leading us*. We believed in the work of the Holy Spirit, along with the balanced teaching of God's Word: We just

let God do the work." During the early house meetings, "We'd play a Chuck tape, pray for people, ask the Spirit to move, and incredible things would happen. We were so intimidated with all these people coming and expecting something from God. We would pray beforehand: 'God, if You don't show up, nothing is going to happen.' And every week, He would."

Sometimes, once a ministry begins to experience success, Bill cautioned, "You're not quite as dependent on the Lord as you were before. You do things by rote: pull out your old notes and preach them again, expecting the same thing to happen. But originally you were on your knees crying out to God, 'Give me something valuable to share.'" He added, "Chuck never changed; he always depended on the Holy Spirit. That's so important. God has given us everything we need: the completed work of Jesus on the cross, and His Holy Spirit to empower us. We can't take credit at all."

Following God's leading often requires a step of faith. "I was inspired when Don McClure left Twin Peaks in 1979 to start a new church. After 10 years, we turned the North Shore church over to Mike Stangel and went to the opposite end of the island to start CC Honolulu in 1982. The scary thing was, we had three children, no income, and only a handful of people who came to help. We prayed, crying out to the Lord for help." Just a few months after the move, they began receiving \$1,200 from two donors in monthly support. "We were in tears; we saw God providing and affirming our steps of faith."

Today, CC Honolulu has two radio stations, a beautiful six-acre campus, several ministry houses, and a K-12 school. Bill rejoiced, "God has been faithful beyond our hopes. The next generation, we want them to carry on the integrity of the ministry that God has given. No man can put his fingerprints on it. When I am weak, that's when God is strong." He urged pastors to "be genuine, be yourself, stay faithful to the Lord in the little things, and simply teach the Word of God." He exhorted, "God is not going to reward us based on the size of our churches, but on how faithful we were to minister to those that God has given us."

Grace upon Grace

For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. HEBREWS 13:9b

Pastor Chuck explained CC's position on grace: "Without the grace of God, none of us would have a chance. We need the grace of God in our lives...daily. We experience it, and we're also saved by it personally. But we also stand in grace. We believe in the love and grace that seeks to restore the fallen." He continued, "Having been forgiven, we need to be forgiving. Having received mercy, we must show mercy. Having received grace, we must be gracious."

When the Pharisees brought the adulterous woman to Jesus and wanted to stone her, Jesus said to them, "**He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her**" (John 8:7b). When her accusers had gone away, Jesus stated to the woman, "**Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more**" (John 8:11b). Chuck shared, "Jesus was interested in ministering to [her], helping her, putting her life back together, not condemning her. Calvary Chapel seeks to minister to hurting people—to see them restored." John 1:17 says, **For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.** In light of this, Chuck said, "If I am to be a minister of Jesus Christ, then I must be ministering grace."



Pastor David Rosales

Pastor David Rosales of CC Chino Valley, CA, explained, "Grace is the unmerited favor of God. Every aspect of the believer's life is saturated by the grace of God. All true ministry begins with God's grace." He cited, **For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God** (Ephesians 2:8). "So we received

from God the grace that enables us to be saved, to remain steadfast in Him, and we also receive our spiritual gifts by the grace of God—having **gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us**" (Romans 12:6b, NKJV). Saved in 1970 at age 20, Pastor David recalled how Pastor Chuck and Kay reached out to the young hippies when many traditional churches were condemning them. "Pastor Chuck proclaimed a message filled with the grace of God. He saw the need for that because of the wretched lives we lived. We needed to know that we could never be good enough on our own, and that we needed help. So instead of preaching to us to cut our hair, take a bath, and get a job—the first thing Chuck wanted us to understand was how good God is, what He can do, how He changes you."

David remembered, "I was raised in a traditional church, but I had never heard the message of God's welcoming love. Grace was something I got after I did something—confession, penance. So I was amazed when I heard that Jesus would extend to me the favor of God if I would just confess my sin to Him and receive His grace. I didn't need to clean myself up; I just needed to come to Him and ask Him to cleanse me."

As a young man aware of his sinful lifestyle, David was captivated by how Jesus repeatedly showed grace to sinners in the New Testament: the Samaritan woman at the well living with a man out of wedlock in John 4; the woman caught in adultery in John 8; the woman with a bad reputation who washed Jesus's feet with her tears in Luke 7. "Jesus said the one who is a great sinner will be forgiven much and will love Him much," he recalled. That kind of unlimited grace "affected the rest of my life. Over the years, I have extended God's grace to others because that's what God extended to me."

Grace does not mean condoning sin. "I have seen that **love covers a multitude of sins** (1 Peter 4:8b, HCSB). And when you genuinely love someone in the Lord, you're going to be real with them—not turn a deaf ear or blind eye to blatant sin in their lives. But you're also not going to be judging them." He cited Romans 6:1b-2a, **Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.** He added, "God's grace was not given to us to enable us to continue in sin but to free us from the bondage of sin."

Pastor David concluded, "When you don't understand the grace of God, you create a system of self-righteousness built on human effort. Then you end up with cults like Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and the Muslim faith. These all attempt to be good people in their own power to gain righteousness." The self-righteous will eventually be discouraged by their failure, but those who understand God's unconditional love and grace will love Him more. He explained, "That's how grace works: We are not out trying to earn God's favor, but we are humbly saying, 'I need God's favor.' And then we believe we have it because He promised, and our God does not lie."

Priority of the Word

For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. ACTS 20:27

Citing the above verse, Pastor Chuck remarked, "The only way a person [today] could make that claim would be if he

taught through the whole Word of God ... from Genesis to Revelation." Though topical messages may have their place on occasion, Chuck commented, he took his congregation at CC Costa Mesa, CA, through the entire Bible at least eight times.

Teaching through the Bible **precept upon precept; line upon line** (Isaiah 28:13b), means going verse by verse through each chapter in an expositional style. **So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading** (Nehemiah 8:8). Chuck explained, "[T]his is a worthy definition of expositional preaching—to read the Word, give the sense, and cause people to understand the meaning."

He urged pastors to faithfully teach the Word, even if they don't see much growth at first. "The seed [of the Word] doesn't bear fruit overnight. ...As a general rule, it's in the third year that you begin to see fruit as a result of planting the Word in the hearts of the people." Rather than imitating flashy ministries that draw temporary crowds, Chuck urged pastors to aim for eternal rewards: **And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever** (Daniel 12:3).

Pastor Jeff Johnson of CC Downey, CA, commented, "In 45 years of ministry, I have found that what people need is the Word. They don't need our philosophies or our stories. ...It takes time and patience, but that's what ministers to the people. The Word gives us healing and opens hearts and eyes. The Word is our counselor, gives us direction—it's the answer book to everything in life." He cited 1 John 2:14b, **[Y]oung men ... you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one** (NKJV). "The Word helps us in our spiritual warfare, with our marriage, our job. It brings us victory. We need to trust the Word of God, really get into the Word, and submit to the Word—not leaning on our own understanding but doing what He says."

Jeff rejoiced, "We continue to see many lives transformed. God tells us, **'My word ... shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish ... the thing for which I sent it'**" (Isaiah 55:11b, NKJV). When His Word goes out, we're seeing tremendous healings. I believe the world, the flesh, and the devil are trying to distract us and keep us from the Word of God—because the enemy knows that when we get in the Word, we're going to have the victory."



Pastor Jeff Johnson

The Word of God helps us resist temptation. Jeff summarized Luke 4:1-12: "When Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted three times, each time Jesus responded by saying, **'It is written,'** and He quoted Scripture. We need to know the Word so well that we can stand when temptation comes. Get into it—read it, mark it, study it, spend time in it, get to know it." For those who have a hard time reading the Bible, he suggested, "If you don't have a hunger toward the Word, find a good translation that speaks to you and ask God to give you a hunger for His Word. We can ask God for that hunger."

We also need to read Scripture daily. **And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine** (Acts 2:42a, NKJV). Pastor Jeff explained, "They 'steadfastly' continued—it's every day. We need to be walking in the Word so that we can be walking in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit. There's no other way; you've got to tune into God to be led God's way and not your way."

Believing only parts of the Word, he said, will lead to "carnality in your life, in your relationship with God. We have to take the whole counsel of God, cover to cover. This is the answer book for us if we want to have an impact on the world and make a difference." ☞

All Scripture quoted from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

"THE WORD IS OUR COUNSELOR, GIVES US DIRECTION—IT'S THE ANSWER BOOK TO EVERYTHING IN LIFE."—PASTOR JEFF JOHNSON

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Part Three of a continuing series on the Calvary Chapel Distinctives. This issue includes: Having Begun in the Spirit, Ventures of Faith, and Church Government. This article was edited by permission and condensed from Calvary Chapel Distinctives by the late Pastor Chuck Smith. All Scripture is from the King James Version (KJV) unless noted.

Having Begun In the Spirit

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit. 2 CORINTHIANS 3:5-6b

Calvary Chapel is a work that was begun by the Holy Spirit. Every new and great movement of God is born of the Spirit. Yet historically, many such moves of God seem to deviate from the birth in the Spirit to ultimately seeking to be perfected in the flesh. Movements that were once alive in the Spirit can become dead in ritualism.

As the Lord said to Zechariah, ***Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts*** (Zechariah 4:6b). Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia, chiding them. ***Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*** (Galatians 3:3). God will go to tremendous lengths to make certain that His chosen leaders rely on the Holy Spirit and not on their own power and wisdom.

Moses is one example. He felt the call of God upon his heart. He knew that God had ordained him for a purpose, but then he found himself out in the desert for forty years with no self-worth or confidence. Moses initially objected, saying, ***Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?*** (Exodus 3:11). But God's answer to Moses' objection was ***Certainly I will be with thee*** (Exodus 3:12).

In the Book of Judges, when the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and began to worship false gods,

God delivered them into the hands of the Midianites. The children of Israel began to cry to the Lord. So the Lord sent His angel to Gideon. And Gideon responded by saying basically, "Lord, You're scraping the bottom of the barrel. My family is poor and I'm the least of the family." He thought he was disqualifying himself, but in reality he was the kind of person God was looking for. God desired a person who knew that he didn't have the capacity or the ability to accomplish the deliverance of a nation—who knew he would have to rely upon the Lord if anything was to be done. God also had to bring Moses to this place of dependence so that He could use him too. When we don't have confidence in our own power, we know that if the work is going to be done, it has to be done by the Lord.

So the Calvary Chapel movement is not the first time that God has used society's castoffs to do a wonderful work. But it's somewhat sad that once God begins to use us, we start looking for reasons why God would use us. We try to become perfected in the flesh. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul said, ***For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called*** (I Corinthians 1:26). The purpose of God is to choose those who really aren't qualified, but then to anoint them with His Spirit. Then, the good results are an amazement and a wonder to the world. You see, God wants to work, but God wants to receive the glory for the work that He does. People can only look on, shake their heads, and say, "I don't understand it, but God's anointing is there. God is sure using them."

I wonder how many times the work that the Lord wants to do is hindered because God can't find men who will depend on His wisdom and not their own. Yet I do believe in education. My own life has been a life of study. It's important to be prepared in the Word of God, but not from a purely humanistic standpoint. True education doesn't come from the wisdom of the world, but by the guidance and the wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit.

The only thing that's worthwhile is that you understand and know God. That's why God chooses such totally unqualified people, fills them with His Spirit, and then does a mighty work through them, astounding and baffling the world. Now, how can we be so foolish as to try to find some reason in us to explain why God used us, so that we might glory in ourselves rather than glorying in the Lord and in what He has done?

Paul, writing to the Corinthians said, ***For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?*** (I Corinthians 4:7, NKJV). Whatever you have, you've received it as a gift from God.

Ventures of Faith

But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. HEBREWS 11:6

It's always exciting to give God a chance to work. The way we discover how God wants to work is to venture out in faith. Step out and see what the Lord might do. But there has to be a guard against presumption. A lot of people fall back on human effort when God's hand obviously is not in it. I've ventured out many times only to discover that God wasn't in it. What do you do then? You retreat. There's a time when God uses a particular kind of a program, but then that time passes. Unfortunately, it's become a tradition for people to try to keep it alive. With God's help we learn to let things die a natural death instead of trying to keep things going by artificial means.

I thank God He has given Calvary Chapels a lot of pastors who caught this vision of simply venturing out in faith. It's a thrill to see how God is blessing when we dare to step out and allow Him to do what He wants to do, giving ourselves over as instruments through which He can do

what He so desires. The eyes of the Lord are still going to and fro throughout the earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are perfect towards Him. Get your heart in harmony with His, and you will be amazed at what God will do and how God will bless.

Church Government

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church. EPHESIANS 1:22

Moses was an earthly leader the people recognized as receiving from God guidance, direction, laws, and rules for the nation of Israel. In the church today we see this structure in a modified form. We see that Jesus Christ is the Head over the body of the church, the One in charge. Pastors need to be like Moses, in touch with Jesus and receiving His direction and guidance, leading the church in such a way that people know the Lord is in control.

Also, like Moses, within the church we have a board of elders who pray with us and support us in seeking the Lord's leading for the church. It's necessary to have godly men who recognize that God has called and ordained the pastor of the church, men who will work with and support what God is directing the pastor to implement. A good board is one of the greatest assets you can have in your ministry. Real elders aren't a bunch of "yes" men, but men yielded to the Holy Spirit. They're a real buffer and protection for the pastor. Their job is to interface with the congregation and deal with any problems that the people may bring to them.

I believe God's model is that the pastor is ruled over by the Lord and recognized by the congregation as God's anointed instrument to lead the church, with the board guiding and directing. Complementing this is the role of the assisting pastors. They are there to minister to the spiritual needs of the people on a daily basis. With these components in place, this creates an effective form of church government. ✚